

Endorsed by:



United
Advocates
for Children
of California



California Alliance
OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

California Alliance of
Child and Family
Services



California
Healthcare
Association



California
Psychiatric
Association



NAMI California



California
Council of
Community
Mental
Health
Agencies



Mental
Health
Association
in California



California
Association
of Marriage
and Family
Therapists



California
Mental
Health
Planning
Council

Dr. Stephen Mayberg
Director
State Department of Mental Health
1600 9th Street, #151
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Medi-Cal Benefits

Dear Dr. Mayberg,

We urge you to ensure that there is no reduction in the full range of Medi-Cal specialty mental health services currently available to seriously emotionally disturbed (SED) children and severely mentally ill (SMI) adults. These individuals are among the most vulnerable members of our society. Access to a broad range of effectively managed, medically necessary services delivered in a system of care context with the federal funds to support these services is essential to achieving cost-effective, positive treatment outcomes. Moreover, we believe that reducing the array of services available will not save funds, as any savings will be more than offset by increases in institutionalization and incarceration.

Our initial review of your proposal suggests that you intend to use Medi-Cal aid codes to determine which children and adults will be subject to a restricted range of services or other changes. Aid codes will protect most of the seriously mentally ill adults as they qualify for Medi-Cal as a result of their SSI. However, many seriously emotionally disturbed children may not be protected as they qualify for Medi-Cal as a result of TANF and other aid codes that appear to be included in your proposed changes.

We urge you to use serious emotional disturbance or severe mental illness as defined in W&I Code 5600.3 as a qualification for the full range of Medi-Cal specialty mental health services currently available. Health plans that participate in the Healthy Families program already determine this qualification for seriously emotionally disturbed children. A similar mechanism could be established for both children and adults for the Medi-Cal program.

While we understand that you want to more closely align coverage with the private sector, it is clear that private health plans have never done a good job of meeting the mental health treatment needs of seriously emotionally disturbed children and severely mentally ill adults. AB 88, the mental health parity bill, was passed several years ago in recognition of this fact. With its passage we hoped that services would improve but change has been slow and uneven across the state. A broad array of services is available in a small number of private plans but is not the norm. We urge you not to align the Medi-Cal specialty mental health services benefit with the largely inadequate private sector benefit that, in our opinion, does not meet the parity standard.

If you concur with these recommendations, we look forward to working with you to incorporate them into your Medi-Cal reform proposals. If you disagree, we hope you will meet with us as soon as possible to discuss our recommendations and find ways to resolve our differences.

Sincerely,

United Advocates for Children of California
California Alliance of Child & Family Services
California Healthcare Association
California Council of Community Mental Health Agencies
California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists

NAMI California,
California Psychiatric Association
Mental Health Association in California
California Mental Health Planning Council